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Oordelen in taal. Semantische en pragmatische aspecten van evaluaties in narratieve communicatie.

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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

1985

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Bax, M. M. H. (1985). *Oordelen in taal. Semantische en pragmatische aspecten van evaluaties in narratieve communicatie*. Wolters-Noordhoff.

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SUMMARY^{*}

Introduction

In this study (the title of which can be paraphrased: *Evaluative Language. Semantic and Pragmatic Features of Narrative Evaluations*), we are concerned with an important domain of language use, viz. the expression of value judgements. Focusing on evaluative statements made in the course of stories told in the context of radio and television interviews in Dutch, we advance a theory about the expression in language of attitudes and emotions. The general nature of our research into evaluative language is a pragmatic one, but our analysis includes the propositional characteristics of evaluations as well as the rhetorical devices that speakers (of Dutch) employ to argue, or to suggest, the plausibility of their standpoint.

Chapter 1

The main aim of our first chapter is methodological. After presenting the reader with the central issue of our study (i.e. the specification of the options that language users have at their disposal to express value judgements, and the explanation of why certain options are chosen), we go into, albeit not deeply, the scholarly background to our research, outlining some major developments in the functional approach to ordinary language and highlighting, of course, Austin's contributions to the field.

From this survey it follows that the evaluative function of language ought to be studied *in vivo*, which means that value judgements are to be analysed in their context of utterance. We then single out narrative as a genre of language use that is most suitable for our purposes, and we offer a provisional introduction to the theory of oral narrative (which is further substantiated in Ch. 2). Building mainly on Labov's expositions concerning the overall structure of oral narrative, we argue that value judgements are best studied in the context of narration, considering that

- narrative provides a rich source of relevant material, since narrative, as a conversational genre, compels the narrator to underline the 'tellability' of his story, and various evaluation devices are considered as proper means to this end;
- focusing on narrative evaluations enables us to take into account the 'objects' of evaluation, that is the *evaluata*, since the narrator not only expresses his attitudes or emotions, but also describes the events or the states of affair to which his evaluations pertain;
- the last decade has shown a vast increase of studies on narrative from the perspectives of both text grammar and functional linguistics - therefore, our analysis can side with a fruitful tradition, if not a paradigm.

Having thus narrowed down the open-ended category of value judgements to narrative evaluation, our next step is to argue the methodological advantages of centring on narrative evaluations that are offered in the context of stories in broadcast interviews. In order to do so we discuss some characteristics of the mass media, concluding that

- since mass communication is public communication, the conditions under which the researcher interprets the data that narratives in the mass

^{*} I am most grateful to Dr A.J. van Essen who was kind enough to correct the worst mistakes in my English.

media constitute, are most favourable. Contrary to private interaction which is liable to develop in a specific recipient-designed way, thus tending to become unintelligible for non-participants (including the researcher), the 'public' language used in the mass media is in principle designed to be understandable for every message receiver; - from the unilateral nature of mass communication it follows that narratives in the mass media tend to be evaluated more clearly or more strongly than narratives performed in private conversations allowing feedback.

Chapter 2

This chapter opens with a discussion of several essential aspects of recent research into the characteristics of 'natural narrative' or non-literary stories, first tackling the issue of how to define narrative. Considering several proposals that have been put forward to settle this theme, we argue that our analysis is favoured by a liberal standpoint as regards story definition, thus siding with prominent scholars like Labov and, especially, Polanyi. Distinguishing two main streams in linguistic and discourse studies on narrative, we further explore the methodological and analytical characteristics of the structural approach to narrative or, as it is aptly termed, story grammar. Duly acknowledging story grammars for the insights they allow into the deep structures that underlie narrative performance, it is nevertheless demonstrated that, by and large, the structuralist approach to narrative systematically ignores the evaluative structures of story texts, which suggests that story grammar has little to offer to those interested in the expressive components of story telling.

A functional approach to narrative, as outlined by Labov and expanded first and foremost by Polanyi, would be more promising: within this perspective, ample consideration is given to the fact that narratives, although monologues in many respects, are typically told in conversational settings, and that the genre as such meets a set of severe interactional constraints. As Labov has convincingly argued, narrative evaluations can be explained, both as regards their occurrence and their linguistic forms, in terms of their interactional function.

However, when it comes to examining the details of Labov's theory of evaluation, we arrive at the conclusion that it is at fault. We will say this much for his theory: that, inspiring and influential though it may be, its linguistic analysis of evaluations as departures from basic narrative syntax is lacking in consistent explanations; the one-to-one relationship that Labov discerns between syntactic 'markedness' and evaluative function is demonstrably fallacious. As to Polanyi's achievements regarding the analysis of evaluative devices that play a part in the shaping of narrative texts, we cannot help drawing similar conclusions: once her theory of evaluation, so eloquently proposed throughout her various articles on the subject, is scrutinized, one is struck by the fact that Polanyi's often insightful remarks do not allow for a generalized theory, since she deems the force of potential evaluative means completely dependent on the nature of textual environment.

Amplifying our refutation of the validity of Labov's and Polanyi's views about narrative evaluations, we contend that an adequate theory of evaluative language has not so become available. We subsequently argue that in order to develop a such theory, one would be well-advised to

look to the philosophy of language, notably speech act theory, and psychology so as to achieve insight into the fundamental aspects of the expression of attitudes, standpoints, feelings, etc., and in the psychological processes that logically forgo evaluative utterances.

Chapter 3

The point of departure of our explorations into the speech act status of (narrative) evaluation is unavoidably Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts that makes provision for cases comparable to the ones under discussion in that it comprises a category designated as 'expressives'. The illocutionary point of this class is to express the speaker's psychological state about a state of affairs, i.e. his feelings and attitudes. Problems arise when what Searle assumes to be characteristics of expressive speech acts are further examined. Specifically, his contention "that in expressives there is no direction of fit" is shown to be erroneous, since in expressing a value judgement (a type of act that undoubtedly falls under the category of expressives), a speaker is certainly "trying to get the words to match the world" (to adopt Searle's phraseology). In this respect, evaluations are comparable to representatives - a viewpoint that comes close to Austin's - in that they have connections with truth and falsity. Siding with such philosophers as Ross and Lewis, we argue that the propositional content of any evaluative statement is capable of a kind of verification. Once the tenability of value judgements is ascertained, we assert that evaluative statements emanate from cognitive processes: an evaluatum is judged according to some evaluation standard, and the evaluator has to determine the good-making and bad-making characteristics of the evaluatum in order to arrive at a value judgement. In agreement with Taylor, we further propose that a person's value judgement entails his pro or con-attitude towards the evaluatum. We develop a structural basis for the analysis of evaluative language when we explore the psychological ramifications of evaluative attitudes. Drawing upon Lyons's philosophical treatise on emotion, we conclude with a formula that represents the constituents of the semantic deep structure of evaluative utterances. As it shows how the constituents mutually hang together, this prototype serves as a categorization device for the analysis of our empirical data.

Chapter 4

Applying the model reasoned in Ch. 3, our analysis provides a descriptive and explanatory framework for the linguistic realisation of narrative evaluations. On the grounds of propositional properties we identify three basic modes for evaluation expression in a narrative context: the attitudinal mode, the emotional mode, and the actional mode; the characteristics of each such basic mode are further examined. As to the attitudinal mode, we begin by discriminating between worth or value on the one hand and valuation or appraisal on the other in order to distinguish between the object-oriented and the subject-oriented aspects of evaluations; those linguistic devices are especially examined (and explained) that allow of attributing the qualification 'context actualization', by which a certain foregrounding of the actual narrator is meant that results from the way he expresses his value judgements and/or his estimates. As to the latter, we go rather deeply into the trivia of linguistic performance or language use so as to identify the whole gamut

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of strategies that can be exploited to give a narrative evaluation a certain 'personal touch'.

Our treatment of the emotional mode builds on Lyons's analysis of the psychophysical nature of emotions. Disentangling its implications as regards emotional utterances, we advance his 'causal-evaluative' theory of emotion, showing (the) different formulation options that speakers have, and ascertaining (and explaining) the preference that narrators especially have for statements that describe their physical agitations during the event that is narrated or that feature symptoms which are indexically related to the bodily changes that they experience during the narration but which bespeak their attitude towards the narrated event.

We proceed with a discussion of the properties of the actional mode, under which fall utterances that indicate the narrator's evaluative attitude by means of a description of the overt actions he performed as a concomitant to that standpoint.

As regards all three basic modes, our dealings with the minutiae of evaluative language lead us to the conclusion that context actualization - which stresses the quality of a strong personal involvement of the narrator - is the impetus of utterance construction in the evaluation structure of narrative.

We follow up our explanation of the fundamentals of narrative evaluation by two derivational subjects: compound evaluations and implicit evaluation. As to the former category, we discern various types of compoundedness. Focusing on conjunctions first, we discuss (modal) congruency and (attitudinal) homogeneity. We then turn to narrative evaluations that are discontinuously organized in the overall fabric of the narrative text; first we discuss the connections between prospective and retrospective evaluations; second, we draw attention to a pragmatic phenomenon termed 'evaluative pincer structures'. The final topic under discussion in the lengthy fourth chapter is implicit evaluation. In implicit evaluation the speaker is not conveying evaluative information through the propositional content; rather, his attitude is signalled by the way he offers descriptive narrative information. As to the formal aspects of these 'evaluative descriptions', we observe several strategies that are parasitic on the devices employed to 'personalize' explicit evaluative statements.

It is our conviction that our analysis of narrative evaluations makes up what largely remained without sufficient foundation in Labov's and Polanyi's work, and to a considerable extent expands linguistic theory of evaluative language in general.

Chapter 5

In this chapter, the results of our research are considered from the perspective of rhetorics. Having gained insight in the details of evaluative language, we try to ascertain what are the 'tactical merits' of the options that narrators have to express their attitudes. Utilizing the conception of a rhetoric that equates rhetorical strategies to means used (by the narrator, in our case) to maximize the chance that the receiver will respond in the way favoured or intended by the sender of the message, we initially dwell on such strategies that are argumentative in nature. We refer to argumentative strategies if a narrator is trying to convince the addressee of the plausibility of his judgement on the grounds of a rational argument. Drawing upon the data, we discuss, in some technical detail, several argumentative procedures that narrators

habitually follow when they argue their standpoint.

A set of quite different types of rhetorical strategies is assembled in a category termed 'interactional strategies'; these differ from argumentative strategies in that they fall outside the domain of giving reasons. What they have in common with each other, though, is that their rhetorical impact builds on the interactional ('interhuman', if you like) relation between the narrator and the addressee. Arguing along lines such as developed by Goffman or Brown and Levinson, we establish the connection between certain formulation options and the speaker's '(positive or negative) face', thus assessing the underlying rationale of a broad range of phenomena of language usage manifesting in, or in the context of, evaluation; specifically, the tendency of context actualization discerned in Ch. 4 can be well understood when viewed in the light of rhetorical quality.

Chapter 6

In a concise retrospect, the findings of our research into the evaluative dimension of oral narrative are interpreted from a higher-ranking viewpoint. Given the characteristics of evaluative performance, we reflect that linguistic forms (such as our data) are to be conceived of as the outcome of the interplay (or interaction) of two autonomous systems that, by and large, make up an individual's linguistic competence. It is suggested that all linguistic output is governed by two different sets of production conditions: the language system, or grammar, which as such partakes of the characteristics of a World 1 object in the sense of Popper's, and the communication system (a World 3 object according to the alleged ontology) which, confined to our subject, comprises the (practical) knowledge of how one contrives to have the intended impact on the listener. Language production *in actu* emanates from the co-operation of both systems, presumably in that World 3 objects act on World 1 objects. From the World 3 system all those pragmatic features of evaluative statements derive that, in a narrative context, serve to project agreement between interlocutors, and that so heartily flavour narrations.

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